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FOR ACTION

UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Report on the fifth meeting held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Paris, 6-7 May 1996

SUMMARY

The present report contains the recommendations of the fifth meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNESCO, which met at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 6-7 May 1996.

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RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

6-7 May 1996, UNESCO, Paris

The Fifth Meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education was held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 6 and 7 May 1996, with the participation of the respective Executive Board members and Secretariat representatives. Mr E. Akinluyi (Nigeria) was designated Chairperson and Ms E. Sutherland Addy (Ghana) and Ms Viera Polakovicova (Slovakia) as rapporteurs. The meeting was held in the context of the mid-decade review of Education for All (EFA) in which the two Organizations are co-operating actively at global, regional and national levels. It also reviewed the action taken to implement the recommendations of the last JCE meeting, held in 1994. While recognizing the significant progress made in the common efforts for achieving EFA goals, the meeting underlined the formidable obstacles that are faced in this regard. The need for even greater synergy and complementarity in the work of the two Organizations was strongly emphasized by all participants.

The UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education recommends to the Executive Boards of UNESCO and UNICEF that:

1. Collaboration should continue in the area of capacity-building for planning and management of basic education as well as education information and statistics, capitalizing on the work done so far and giving greater attention to support the process at the country level in the context of national plans and programmes. The UN Special Initiative for Africa and country programmes of both Organizations offer special opportunities. The effort to promote decentralization of planning and management to local and institution levels should recognize the importance of setting overall policies, strategies and priorities and creating the supportive environment at the national and provincial levels. For decentralization to be effective, it should be supported by the greater involvement of local communities and parents in decisions which affect the quantity and quality of educational services available to them.

2. The two Organizations should collaborate to support collecting, analysing, and disseminating educational statistics, with a view to strengthening effectiveness, encouraging partnerships with other agencies, and making accurate and up-to-date statistical information available to all interested users.

3. Both Organizations should support and continue collaboration on Monitoring Learning Achievement, with particular emphasis on developing countries' capacity in this area; building regional capacity in selected institutions; adapting and applying methodologies; and drawing lessons from within and outside the project to promote wider application as a part of country programmes of both Organizations. Countries already participating in the project should contribute actively to its wider application.

Both Organizations should engage in additional conceptual work on learning achievement, as it relates to the Jomtien definition of basic education.

4. Both Organizations should jointly support the evolving focus of the Innovations Project to (i) become increasingly country and regionally based with the two Organizations jointly deciding on relevant experiences and identifying country partners, and (ii) conduct critical analyses of a number of relevant experiences on key issues, moving from individual case studies and their publication. Relevant examples include the remuneration of the teaching force, teacher performance criteria, improvements in teacher management and specific issues related to the education of girls.

5. Teachers as professionals and as members of society deserve ongoing attention by the two Organizations as their status and conditions of work continue to deteriorate worldwide. Specifically the two agencies should support a study outlining a range of options for systems of teachers' remuneration in countries in difficult economic circumstances. This study should address both principles and operational mechanisms, citing examples and taking into consideration the requirements of universal basic education with acceptable quality, performance criteria, and community and parental involvement.

6. Both Organizations should build on the successful collaboration on the education of girls and women that was initiated at Ouagadougou in 1993 and support appropriate activities based on an agreed-upon, well articulated strategic global approach that addresses policy and a systematic approach toward diversified gender-sensitive education systems. A range of country-based activities that serve to implement this approach should be supported.

7. Education in emergency situations should be viewed as a development programme from the outset; one that can serve as a catalyst to redeveloping an improved system of education. The Boards and the Secretariats of both Organizations should ensure that there is full recognition of education as an integral part of every emergency programme in the United Nations system's humanitarian and emergency response and in every Joint Appeal. Boards should also encourage countries that periodically experience disasters to develop a solid approach to education in national emergency preparedness, planning and responses as a permanent component of the national education plan. It is recognized that the Executive Board of UNICEF has already decided at its 1995 annual session, that education of children will play a major role in all UNICEF emergency interventions as part of its programme.

8. UNICEF and UNESCO, while welcoming the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa should jointly specify the role that they will play in the area of education and develop appropriate strategies towards achieving its goals.

9. The two Organizations should collaborate in a wide range of areas in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) including (i) dissemination of knowledge and understanding of the CRC for children, all other participants in the education system and society at large, (ii) collection of lessons from experience and of resource materials for application of the CRC in primary education, and (iii) advocacy and mobilization for the right to education, especially with regard to exploitative child labour and the education of girls.

   The Executive Boards of both Organizations should urge governments to involve their ministries of education and other appropriate authorities in the process of monitoring of and report on the implementation of the CRC.

10. The executive heads of both Organizations should jointly prepare a concrete targeted strategy reflecting these recommendations and report to the next JCE meeting on the extent to which the targets established have been met.

In view of the important challenges in the field of Education for All, requiring joint action by the two Organizations, the Committee decided to hold a special meeting in mid-1997. In this connection, it welcomed the offer of the Committee member from Romania to host such a meeting, and to provide on that occasion the opportunity for visits to appropriate educational programmes and institutions in the country.